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**Subject:** Residents express PFOA concerns during forum in Cambridge

## Residents express PFOA concerns during forum in Cambridge

★ [poststar.com/news/local/residents-express-pfoa-concerns-during-forum-in-cambridge/article\\_95ba90ac-6317-50d8-97ca-f0d38140e1a6.html](http://poststar.com/news/local/residents-express-pfoa-concerns-during-forum-in-cambridge/article_95ba90ac-6317-50d8-97ca-f0d38140e1a6.html)

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CAMBRIDGE — Residents in southern Washington County who are affected by PFOA contamination had many questions, ranging from where it came from to how to get their wells treated, at a forum about the issue Wednesday.

About 75 people came out to Cambridge Central to get an update on the PFOA contamination that has affected White Creek and Cambridge.

Concentrations of the chemical, which was used in nonstick coatings such as Teflon, have been found in 165 wells that were sampled in Washington County. Thirty of them had levels of PFOA above the Environmental Protection Agency's threshold of 70 parts per trillion. A total of 79 had readings lower than that limit and 52 had no presence of PFOA. Results are pending for four wells.

Prolonged exposure to the chemical could result in risk of cancer, birth defects or problems with the liver, immune system and thyroid, according to the EPA.

The chemical has been found in Hoosick Falls and Petersburg, and the state in May reached a settlement with the Saint-Gobain and Honeywell companies to clean up the contamination found in the Hoosick Falls area and pay for the cost.

Environmental officials are trying to determine why PFOA, which is known formally as perfluorooctanoic acid, is spreading into Washington County.

"We can't say definitely: it's the plant site, it's the river, it's other disposal sites in this area or it's all of the above," said Mike Ryan, assistant director of the Division of Environmental Remediation.

Investigators began their work in the Hoosick Falls and Petersburg areas and have been moving out from there.

PFOA contamination also has been emanating from landfills in Hoosick Falls and Petersburg. Officials are also looking into reported illegal dumping sites in those two communities, according to Ryan.

DEC has been sampling the Hoosic River in multiple locations. Ryan said the DEC wants to take river samples when the water is low to get a better sense of contaminants.

Residents can call to get on a list to have their wells tested, according to Charlotte Bethoney, region chief with the state Department of Health's Bureau of Environmental Exposure Investigation.

Some residents wanted the state to test everybody in a 10-mile circle around Hoosick Falls. That is not practical, according to Bethoney. She said the DEC has limited manpower and there are only a small number of laboratories that are equipped to test for PFOA.

"We're trying to approach this strategically," she said.

Ron McEvilly of White Creek said he had called to request that his well be tested and was told that he was "on the wrong side of Route 22."

"You're telling me it's right there. I should at least be able to get a test, especially with children and a breastfeeding mother," he said.

If residents want to test their wells immediately, Bethoney said they would have to pay the cost, which can be upwards of \$400.

State Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queensbury, said that is not acceptable.

"As a representative of this area, I believe they're entitled to a test, and not on their own dollar," she said.

People who are close to the contaminated sites should have priority, according to Little.

"I think we can all understand if you're miles away, you may have to wait. When you're this close, for the state to say 'we don't have the resources,' is just not acceptable," she said.

"I think the more people have heard here tonight, the more frightening it is to them," Little added.

Little also said if the PFOA outbreak had happened in a major city, it would be costing the state a fortune. She promised that she would work in the Senate to provide additional resources.

Residents were also concerned that New York state has set its PFOA exposure threshold at 70 parts per trillion. Vermont has set a maximum level for children at 20 parts per trillion and New Jersey is at 14 parts per trillion.

New York modeled its guideline after the EPA standards, according to Jim Bowers of the Department of Health.

"I can't speak to what other people in other states have done," he said. Bowers said the level is set based upon what health effects have been seen in studies on rodents. The level where health problems were observed was 110,000 parts per trillion. Environmental officials extrapolated that to humans and built in safety cushions based upon vulnerable populations such as lactating women and infants.

He pointed out that humans already have a certain amount of PFOA in their body just through exposure to things in the environment.

"There are hundreds of thousands of chemicals that we live with on a daily basis," he said.

White Creek Town Board member Lance Wang said the DEC should be installing filtration systems — regardless if residents levels of PFOA are above or below the 70 parts per trillion threshold.

"Should we say that the standard of our PFOA (contamination) is zero," he said.

Bethoney said that if residents have been tested and have a level of PFOA, regardless of whether it is

above or below the 70 figure, they can receive a filtration system.

Wang said that is a positive step.

“Originally, we were led to believe that we couldn’t if we weren’t at the 70 amount,” she said.